

6788
The Church of Rome proved to be the
Mother of Harlots.

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED OCTOBER 25th, 1778;

BEING THE DAY OF

HIS MAJESTY'S ACCESSION TO THE
THRONE:

Published at the Request of a considerable Part
of a large Auditory who heard it.

BY JOHN TOWERS,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,
IN BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

—————" Then might ye see
" Cows, Hoods, and Habits, with their Wearers, tost
" And flutter'd into Rags; then Reliques, Beads,
" Indulgences, Dispences, Pardons, Bulls,
" The Sport of Winds. All these upwhirl'd aloft
" Fly o'er the backside of the World far off,
" Into a Limbo, large and broad, since call'd
" 'The Paradife of Fools.'" MILTON.

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M,DCC.LXXIX.

The Church of Rome
Mother of Sinners

S. E. R. M. O. N.

PREACHED OCTOBER 1841

BEING THE DAY OF

THE MAJESTY'S ACCESSION TO THE

THRONE

At a Court held at the

Palace of St. James



BY JOHN TOWERS

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL

IN BARKING NEW CHURCH

ON THE 18th DAY OF OCTOBER 1841

At a Court held at the

Palace of St. James

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A S E R M O N, &c.

REVELATIONS XVII. 5.

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

TRUE RELIGION came from heaven and leads to heaven; it has God for its author, and God for its end: and having so glorious an origin, it necessarily leads to glory and virtue. And whatever irreligious men may say or think of true religion, it is certain that it is *that* which alone can make man happy. And it is the peculiar excellency of real piety, that it sweetens the most bitter trials of life, it makes our bed in our sickness, it takes away from death its sting, and proves, to the comfort of those who possess it, that the judge of the whole earth, will shew himself their friend, when they appear before his awful tribunal. And when we speak of true religion, we speak of the religion of the bible, which is indeed the religion of Jesus: and which is not only thus beneficial to those individuals in whose hearts it reigns, but it is also of the greatest utility to society in general, as it is nobly calculated to make parents affectionate,

tionate, and children dutiful; husbands tender, and wives obedient; to make masters merciful, and servants faithful; and it is that ~~which above all other systems will make~~ princes righteous, and subjects loyal: and it teaches men in every situation to exercise themselves, to keep their consciences void of offence towards God and man; and not only to love their friends, but even to love their enemies, and to put on bowels of compassion and tenderness, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them.

AND in all these respects the religion of Jesus is just the reverse of the antichristian and diabolical religion of the Church of Rome. A religion abominable in its nature and most pernicious in its consequences.

AND against this religion (which indeed is not worthy the name of religion) we shall now venture to draw the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: and at all events, let the consequences be what they may, shall not shun to declare to you the whole counsel of God concerning this matter.

BUT it may be asked, wherein is the necessity or propriety of such a procedure in a protestant country, in which all are Protestants? To this I must answer, that I hope all who
now

now hear me are Protestants; but all in this kingdom are not so; a very great number are papists. And most probably that number will be greatly increased; and it will be no wonder if popish schools and mass-houses should abound amongst us: as we have ESTABLISHED Popery in one part of the British empire, we have TOLERATED it throughout the kingdom, and as we have warmly caressed some of its most zealous votaries.

And that which implies, that we are in more danger of Popery, than is generally imagined, is, that a general stupor has taken possession of us, so that we seem insensible of our danger, both in church and state; and insensibility has been, in more than one instance, the harbinger of the destruction of great empires.

But it is said, Popery is not what it once was, and that it has lost its persecuting spirit; but this, in the very nature of things, must be false; Popery was born in hell, and nourished in the human heart, and while hell continues the same, and the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Popery will still be the same, and it is therefore only fit to be an engine to promote tyranny, superstition and priestcraft; and hence it follows, that though it be right, to tolerate all religions in a free state, and though I would not oppose the toleration, even of Mahomet-antism,

anism, and by no means would wish to have a very Atheist persecuted; yet if there be a religion under heaven which teaches its followers that their God delights in human sacrifices, that they do God good service, in putting THOSE to death who differ from them in their religious sentiments, and that the blood of such persons is admirably calculated to quench the flames of purgatory, through which, they teach, that all must inevitably pass. If such an iniquitous system can be contended for under the notion of religion, it ought not to be considered as worthy of that sacred name; and it is as necessary that the zealous votaries thereof should have their hands tied, as any other set of unprincipled banditti.

It must indeed be allowed that there are some Roman Catholics, whose natural good tempers are such, that they prevent them from delighting to shed the blood of protestants; but what must we think of that religion, which encourages a practice which corrupt nature itself is ashamed of, when influenced by a little natural goodness of temper? It is true also that the papists in this kingdom are peaceable at present; but would they be so if they had all that power in their hands which they wish for? We are much mistaken if we think they would, and therefore we think it our duty to cry aloud against them; and we imagine the words of the text to be suitable for that purpose,

purpose, and hope we were providentially directed to them; and shall venture to affirm, that the character here given, is the character of the Church of Rome, and that *she* is named "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." But as assertions require proofs to support them, I shall, in speaking from these words, shew both from the text and context.

FIRST, that the Church of Rome is here intended.

SECONDLY, Give some reasons why *she* should be called, "Mystery, Babylon the great, &c."

THIRDLY, Prove that *she* is called, with the greatest propriety, "the Mother of Harlots" also.

FOURTHLY, Point out some of those abominations which this Mother of Harlots hath produced in the earth.

AND, lastly, attempt some practical improvement of the whole, as that God who hates Popery, will be pleased to enable me.

FIRST then, observe, that the woman spoken of in the text is said to have her name written on her forehead, alluding to the custom of impudent harlots, who used to hang out signs
to

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to shew where they lived : and thus the Church of Rome is so notorious in her spiritual whoredoms, that every one who searches the scripture carefully, and consults profane history, will soon perceive that the Mother of Harlots lives at ROME. And as she pretends to be the only true mother Church, the Holy Ghost, to reprove and expose her arrogance, here calls her, "the Mother of Harlots."

BUT for the proving of this, let it be first premised, that it is common for the scripture to speak of a large body of people under the idea of one woman ; thus, in the twelfth chapter of these Revelations, John tells of a wonder which he saw in heaven. "A Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet ;" by which undoubtedly is meant the true Church of Christ, which consists of an innumerable multitude ; so to the same purport, in the writings of the prophets we read of "the daughter of Babylon, the daughter of Egypt, and the daughter of Zion," when it is evident that all the people of Babylon, of Egypt, and Zion are meant, and agreeable thereto in respect to the language of the text, there would be no propriety in applying this character to any one person only, but rather to the whole church of Rome ; and we have sufficient authority to prove that a great number of persons are here intended from the 15th verse of this chapter, of which our text

is a part, where it is said, "the waters which thou sawest, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues; on which the whore sitteth."

WE doubt not, therefore, but this Text is the character of the Romish Church at large, and of all persons and things which appertain to her; and this appears most plainly from the ninth verse, where the seven heads of the beast are said to be seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth; which evidently refers to the seven hills on which Rome was built. By this description, Rome has been distinguished, not only by sacred, but by profane writers; some, indeed, have imagined, that this description might be applicable to Constantinople; but that city was never so remarkable for its seven hills, as Rome.

AND in the the 10th and 11th verses of this xviith chapter we have a further proof that the text speaks of Rome, because the account of the several kings spoken of there, is clearly applicable to the Roman government. It is there said, "there are seven kings," which we must not consider as seven individual persons; but rather as signifying seven different kinds of governors, by which Rome hath been governed, including, 1st Kings, 2dly, Consuls, 3dly, Tribunes, 4thly, Decemviri, 5thly, Dictators, 6thly, Pagan Emperors, and 7thly, Christians

B. Emperors.

Emperors. Five of these (it is said) were fallen; because when John wrote this Apocalypse, Rome was no longer governed, either by Kings, Consuls, Tribunes, Decemviri, or Dictators; but by the 6th sort of heathen governors, namely Pagan Emperors; and the 7th, i. e. Christian Emperors, is called the *other*, because different (as being a pure Christian Government) both from the heathen governors who were before, and from the beast, the Pope of Rome, who came after, and was the 8th, in order of time; but is said, in the 11th verse of this chapter, to be of the seven; because the six first orders of the Roman government, and the Popes of Rome, make up seven idolatrous kinds of governors, which the Christian Emperors were distinct from, in that they opposed idolatry, though they came in order of time, between the pagan and papal governors; and these Christian emperors were not yet come, when John wrote these prophecies: but, when they did come they were to continue a short space, until the bishops of Rome should usurp regal authority unto themselves, and appear as a scarlet coloured beast. *This* is that beast on which the Church of Rome sitteth; and thus the Pope, as the pretended successor of St. Peter, assisted by the whole Romish hierarchy, bears up the whole weight of that idolatrous Church; on this hill of sand the Church of Rome is built.

Of this beast it is likewise said, by the Holy Ghost, in the 8th verse, that " he was, and is not, and yet is ;" which refers to the idolatry of Rome, at large ; which is spiritual uncleanness and adultery, and in which the bestiality of Rome principally consists. Now, concerning this idolatry, we may observe, That in its pagan form, it was, i. e. it had an existence, under the pagan emperors ; but in the time when the Church and bishops of Rome became idolatrous, then the beast did not manifest its idolatry in the old pagan way ; but Rome was yet as idolatrous as ever, only in another form ; being then governed by pretended Christian bishops, who, in profession, and in profession only, were enemies to the old idolatry.

Thus the idolatry and wickedness of Rome, *was*, under the pagan emperors, *is not*, in the pagan, but yet *is*, in the papal form, under the popish bishops. And in many respects the customs of the pagan Romans, and of the present papistical Romanists, are similar. The pagan Romans deified their heroes, and placed them among their gods after their deaths, and worshipped them. And so the Papists canonise their dead saints and invoke their assistance : as the old Romans had a god for almost every thing ; so the Church of Rome has her St. Roch, for the pestilence ; St. Apollonia for the tooth-ach ; St. Genoa, for the gout ; St Benedict, for poison ; St. Sigismund,

for fevers ; St. John, for lambs ; St. Luke, for painters ; St. Magdalene, for courtezans ; with a number of tutelargods, for different countries, as St. George, for England ; St. Andrew for Scotland, &c. and a vast many more similar absurdities * : and we may observe a striking likeness between the festivals of the Pagans, and those of the Church of Rome ; so that in many views the Romish religion, is *Paganism* revived, in a Christian form ; or the old pagan idolatry in a new dress, which is called Christian, but which has none of the excellency in Christianity in it ; but is in reality anti-christian,

Having thus attempted, and we hope with some success, to fix the character of the text on the church in Rome ; let us now take some brief notice of that which is said concerning the mother of harlots, and the beast on which she rides, in the beginning of this xviith chapter. In the first verse, she is called " The great whore," with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication. By the whoredom which she is charged with, we are to understand heridolatry, as before observed, agreeable to what is said in the xvth chapter of Ezekiel, and 30th verse, where the inhabitants

* Vide Dr. More's Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity, Page 325. 2d. Part.

of

of Jerusalem are said to have done the work of "an imperious whorish woman," because they had made their high places in every street, and had neglected the worship of God in the temple: and the Church of Rome is called the great whore, because her idolatry is great and flagrant, and of the grossest kind; and those who are said to have committed fornication with her, are those kings and kingdoms, who either have been, or yet are, under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Church of Rome.

When John saw that idolatrous church, he was led into the Wilderness, on which we may observe, that Popery is only to be found in the wilderness of this lower world; Popery will never shew its head in the heavenly Jerusalem; and though in the 12th chapter of these Revelations, the true church is said to have a place in the wilderness; yet her residence is spoken of as being in heaven,

And when the Apostle was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, "He saw a Woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns, ver. 3." The beast being said to be of a scarlet colour, here evidently sets forth the bloody persecuting spirit of the Romish religion, which hath led its bishops and votaries to thirst for the blood of martyrs, even as a ravenous beast thirsts

thirsts for the blood of its prey. The names of blasphemy, which this beast is said to be full of, plainly imply those blasphemous tenets and practices which that idolatrous Church teaches and encourages.

The seven HEADS the Holy Ghost hath interpreted, as meaning the seven hills on which Rome was built, and the seven different kinds of governors which Rome was governed by, before the bishops of Rome usurped the whole power to themselves, as plainly described in the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter; and by the ten horns, we are taught, from the 12th verse, to understand those kings who were afterwards to become subject to the Romish beast, and join with him in making war with the Lamb and his people; but were afterwards to hate the whore and make her desolate; which hath been the case in this country, especially in that period of the Reformation, when Henry VIII. who once loved the whore of Babylon, afterwards made her desolate; and the same hath already had some happy literal accomplishment in some foreign countries.

It is also said, in the 4th verse, that the Woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour which shews that it is the very nature of the Church of Rome, under her usurping bishops, to act as Rome had done before, under
Pagan

Pagan Emperors, to thirst for the blood of the Saints.

It also intimates, as these colours sometimes represent royalty, the usurping spirit of that Church, in taking upon herself the power of governing other nations, and her pride in clothing her cardinals in garments of those colours; and her being decked with gold and precious stones, appears to be descriptive of the vain grandeur of the Pope, when he appears in the pontifical habit with the triple crown, glittering with precious stones.

And lastly the golden cup in her hand, full of abominations, points out all her idolatry and idolatrous customs, which are filthy spiritual fornications; said to be in a golden cup, because while the Church of Rome, was in its chief glory; to follow her was the way to obtain riches and grandeur.

ON the whole, I think it is sufficiently evident, that the Church of Rome is here intended; and that we have not been too positive or dogmatical in asserting, that She is "the Mother of Harlots" here spoken of, and figuratively described, under the character of "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth."

AND

II

AND here we are naturally led to shew why the Church of Rome should be called "Mystery, Babylon the great."

III

AND we begin with observing, that she is not called simply, Babylon; but Mystery, Babylon, i. e. mystical Babylon, or Babylon in a mysterious sense; to teach us that the Babylon here spoken of is not Babylon literally, but Babylon in a figure; an ecclesiastical state, in many respects like Babylon.

AND Rome is here called Babylon, in the same sense that Jerusalem, in this apocalypse is called Sodom and Egypt *spiritually*, where our Lord was crucified; and which for wickedness and for oppressing God's people, was called by these names.

BABYLON is here called "Babylon the great," because it was a very great city, the metropolis of a very large empire. This city was in its highest glory in the reign of Nebuchednezzar, who brought it to its meridian lustre at that time. The wall round about it is said to have been 60 miles in compass *, and not less than 350 feet high, and 87 feet thick. In every side of the walls of this great city were 25 gates, which made an hundred in all, of solid brass.

* Vide, Prideaux's Connection, Vol. I. p. 95.

BUT the principal glory of this city, was the temple of Belus, which in its origin appears to have been built many centuries before the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and it has been thought, and not without some good reason, that it was the very tower of Babel, which the inhabitants of the world built soon after the flood; which they intended to have made reach up unto heaven itself. It was however a most amazing building, and it contained very great riches: and the greatness of this city, and this temple of Belus, particularly caused Babylon to be called Babylon the great. And when Rome, in its pagan state, and when in its papal form, it flourished, it was in this as well as in other respects Babylon the great.

But it must be noted also, that Babylon and its kings, were remarkable for their idolatry: you undoubtedly remember the account in scripture, concerning the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar set up in the plains of Dura, which is mentioned in the iiiid chap. of Daniel; which image all nations were to worship upon pain of being cast into a furnace of fire. And thus Rome, especially under the popes of Rome, hath been remarkable for its idolatry: which has had the sanction of his holiness himself, of which we shall speak more afterwards. Babylon also persecuted, most bitterly, those who refused to join with her in idolatry, thus it was in respect to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,

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who are mentioned in that third chapter, they refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's idol; and when they were asked by the king himself whether it was true that they had dared to refuse to worship the image he had set up, when all refusers were threatened with the flames: they nobly answered, with a courage worthy the disciples of Christ. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; and if it be so," i. e. if we are cast into this furnace, "our God is able to deliver us; and if he does not, we will not worship the image which thou hast set up." As if they had said, we will rather burn than sin against our God; and if he does not please to deliver us miraculously, which he is able to do, yet our being consumed in the fire, will only cause us to soar to heaven so much the sooner: and in consequence of this noble reply, they were cast into the furnace, which was heated seven times hotter on their account, and the king commanded his most mighty men to bind those pious worthies, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace; and so much did the flames thereof rage, that it slew those mighty men who were employed to cast them in. But lo! Nebuchadnezzar, with astonishment, looks at the furnace, and sees these three men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, having no hurt, and their number happily increased by the company of a fourth person, whose form was like the Son of God, who came to these suffering saints in the likeness of that human

human nature which he afterwards actually partook of, and having *his* presence with them, they were happy in the furnace. On their bodies the fire had no power, the hair of their head was not singed, neither had the smell of fire passed upon them.

AND thus, believer, whatever furnace thou art cast into, the Son of God will assuredly be with thee, so that the flames thereof shall not kindle upon thee; and with his spiritual presence the most dreadful furnace is changed into a heaven of enjoyment. And as Babylon, in a literal sense, thus treated God's people of the Jewish nation, and when God was angry with that people, to a certain degree, *they* aggravated their misery; so hath the Church of Rome persecuted the Church of Christ, and have put great numbers to death, for no other reason but because they would not worship the golden image of Popery.

THE pride and arrogance of the Babylonians helps likewise to make Babylon a proper figure of the Romish Church, which like Babylon hath tyrannized over other nations: the popes of Rome have manifested the greatest degree of ecclesiastical insolence, in usurping authority over kings and kingdoms: and hath held those countries in the most abject slavery, which were weak enough to be subject to them. And if we consider the idolatry, the persecuting spirit,

the pride and arrogance*, the tyranny and wickedness of the Church of Rome, and the grandeur it assumes, we shall then think, that there is no name will suit that iniquitous Church better than "Mystery, Babylon the Great," because as in Babylon, so under the wings and countenance of the Church of Rome, all manner of iniquity hath been committed.

AND lastly allow me to observe that as Babylon was to be destroyed, as expressed in the cxxxvii Psalm, and 8th verse, where it is said, "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed," so shall the mystical Babylon Rome, be destroyed; and there is reason to believe that the manner of the destruction of Babylon, was like the manner in which the Church of Rome shall perish. We have, perhaps, no certain reason to think that the Romish religion will be destroyed all at once; but rather that it will fall by little and little, as Babylon did.

BABYLON continued in prosperity until the time of Belshazzar, when it was besieged by

* How abominable was the arrogance of Pope Gregory the VIIth, who made the Emperor Henricus the IVth with his Empress and child, wait several days, fasting, at his gate, in the midst of winter, barefoot, and clad with canvas, hoping for absolution; but after all his Holiness deposed him, and gave his empire to another. Something similar was the conduct of Pope Celestinus the IIId, who crowned the Emperor Henricus the VIth with his feet.

Cyrus

Cyrus, of whom great things are spoken in scripture, who, in conjunction with his uncle Darius the Mede, or, as he is also called Cyaxares, and who appears to have had the honor of all the victories of Cyrus as long as he lived. Cyrus, as his general, laid siege to this great city; but after they had lain before it several months, such was the strength of Babylon, that the conquering of it by force, was thought impracticable, Cyrus, therefore, found it necessary to have recourse to other methods, and to take an advantage of the revelling spirit of the Babylonians,

AND having learned that about this time they usually celebrated an annual festival, at which they indulged themselves in all manner of debauchery and intoxication, and were, therefore, necessarily off their guard; he therefore formed a successful plan, for the purpose of taking the advantage of such a season of dissipation and disorder. And having, on this day, sent a party of his men to the place where a river ran into the city, he contrived to make the river fordable; and by that means his men entered by the channel of the river, and came to the gates of the city, next the river, which, through neglect, that night were left open; so that the soldiers of Cyrus approached the palace of Belshazzar, surprised the guards, rushed into the palace, where they found Belshazzar, whom they slew, fighting valiantly for his life; and

and thus, without farther difficulty, Babylon was taken *.

AND this feast, at which Babylon was conquered, was the very same feast of which we read in the vth chap. of Daniel. There we are told that Belshazzar made a feast for a thousand of his lords, and called for the vessels which his father, (i. e. his grand-father) had taken from the temple of the Lord, and drank wine in them, and praised his gods of gold and silver, in contempt of the true God. But while he was in the very height of his impious mirth, there came forth an hand-writing on the wall; the sight of which made "his countenance change, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." And when Daniel interpreted it, it was found to signify, "God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it; thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians;" and soon after, perhaps immediately, the city was taken, and Belshazzar was slain, and called to appear before that God whom he had just before despised.

BUT this was only the beginning of the fall of Babylon; after having been thus disgraced it

* Vide Prideaux's Connection, Vol. I. Page 120.

was much injured by the waters overrunning part of the country; and its destruction was farther advanced by the rebellion of its inhabitants against Darius Hystaspis, who therefore came against them with a large army, and laid siege to the city for about twenty months, without success; but at last he succeeded, by the stratagem of Zopyrus, one of his chief commanders. This Zopyrus, having cut off his nose and ears, and greatly mangled his body, went to the inhabitants of Babylon, and pretended to have been thus used by his master Darius; and by this deception he got so far into their pity and favor, as to be made chief commander of the forces of the besieged; and then betrayed the city into the hands of his master; who broke down part of its walls and slew many of its inhabitants. But the final destruction of Babylon was owing to the building the city Seleucia, which was named after the name of its founder Seleucus Nicator, who built it within forty miles of Babylon.

WHEN this city Seleucia was built, it was favored with many peculiar privileges; and as Babylon was now much hurt by the many floods it had received, therefore its inhabitants in time entirely deserted it, so that it became desolate; and, at length, nothing remained but its walls which were for a long time an enclosure for wild beasts only; and the very tower and palace became the habitation of serpents and other
venemous

venemous creatures ; and this was literally accomplished what was foretold by Isaiah, in the xiiiith chapter of his prophecy and four last verses, where it is said, “ Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldee’s excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation ; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there ; but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and fityrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces. And her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”

Thus fell Babylon, and in some such manner perhaps, the Church of Rome may fall. And we hope the expulsion of the Jesuits, and the little regard that is paid to the bishop of Rome in some Popish countries, is the beginning of the ruin of the beast, and the great whore that rides thereon. It is indeed to be lamented, that while Popish countries discard the mother of harlots, we seem to be taking her to our bosoms ; and I pray God, that this country and its inhabitants may never be overwhelmed with Popery again.

AND

AND here I would observe, as the closing proof that Rome may be compared to Babylon, that as Babylon at last became the habitation of serpents and dragons, so also those who live and die in the errors and practices of the Church of Rome, have reason to fear, that they shall be to all eternity, the habitation of those serpents and dragons who dwell in the bottomless pit. Wherefore, saith God, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

BUT this may more than suffice, as to this part of our subject; and it is now time that I should hasten, thirdly, to prove the propriety of the apostle's calling the Romish Church, the "Mother of harlots."

AND here it must be allowed, that the pagan religion produced many spiritual harlots; and the same may be observed respecting the delusions of Mahomet: but these religions were not more idolatrous than that of the Church of Rome, which Church is particularly worthy to be called, in an emphatic sense, the "Mother of harlots," because she encourages the most abominable idolatries, under the pretended sanction of the most pure religion of Jesus; and with his name in her mouth, and with a pretended view to his honour, she promotes and practises the most abominable spiritual fornications. Thus,

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while she pretends to be the purest Church under heaven, and that all true Churches originated from her, and that those who differ from her have apostatized from the true Church; and, that there is no salvation out of her pale: while the Church of Rome thus exalts herself, she is, in truth, the most corrupt Church under heaven; and unworthy to be called a Church; because she persecutes the true Church of God, "and changes the truth of God into a lie, and worships and serves the creature more than the Creator, who is over all blessed for ever."

THE papal Church is also the mother of harlots, because by improperly encouraging celibacy, and forbidding marriage (which is the doctrine of devils) to all her priests, she thereby promotes fornication, and begets many fornicators and harlots, in a literal sense; and there is reason to believe, that in their religious houses the greatest abominations of this kind are committed.

THE religion also that she teaches is such, that it enforces the worshipping of images and other idols, and in consequence thereof, her priests are spiritual harlots, who teach the people to worship a consecrated wafer; and all those kingdoms, and all the laity of the Church of Rome, who cleave to that religion, are spiritual harlots, children of the mother of harlots, and with her commit fornication, by worshipping false

faile gods instead of Jehovah. But we have no occasion to be prolix under this head, as the wretched productions and monstrous births of the mother of harlots, will more fully appear, when, in the fourth place, we shew what abominations have sprang from her.

AND here, I persuade myself, you will bear with me if I enlarge on the abominations of the Church of Rome; for like the devils in the poor man mentioned in the gospel, their name is legion, for they are many.

AND let me begin with observing, that this apostate Church hath produced, among other abominations, ABOMINABLE TENETS: the first I shall mention is that pillar of priestcraft which asserts, that it is dangerous and pernicious for the laity to read the Scriptures in their own tongue; and it is undoubtedly calculated to prejudice the Romish religion, for the common people to read the Bible in their mother tongue; for, if they had that liberty, they would soon see that Popery had no foundation in the Word of God. And it is preposterous to think, that we shall be judged by the Bible, and yet not be allowed to search it for ourselves.

THE teaching, that the Pope is infallible is another dangerous error of the Church of Rome; and as a proof of the infallibility of these heads of the Church, they have abolished one

another's decrees ; thus Pope Stephen the VIth, abrogated the decrees of Formosus, his predecessor, drew his body out of the sepulchre, cut off his fingers, which he used in his ordination, and then threw them into the Tiber, saying, ' That he had obtained the Popedom by bribery.' And, in like manner, the next Pope abrogated his decrees ; thus infallible were these successors of St. Peter ; and, it is remarkable, that one of these holy fathers proved to be a harlot, in the most gross sense ; here I refer to pope Johanne, a woman of no small learning, who used so much art, as to arrive at St. Peter's chair ; and when she was riding out, she was actually delivered of the fruit of her whoredoms *, and it is said the Popes carefully avoid riding that way, through shame of the deed to this day : some indeed have denied this fact ; but the more impartial, even of their own writers, have acknowledged the truth of it. But it is, not to be wondered at, that with all their failings, they should pretend to infallibility, when their great Bellarmine has declared, ' If the Pope, by mistake, should command Vice and forbid Virtue, the Church (unless she would sin against conscience) would be obliged to believe, that VICE is GOOD, and VIRTUE IS EVIL.' What a shocking sentiment, and how must the tender conscientious Protestant shudder at it, and be filled with an

* Vide Prideaux's Introduction to History, P. 95.

honest indignation, when he hears, that Evil is thus called Good, and Good, Evil.

3.
As wretched a doctrine is that of TRANSUBSTANTIATION, which supposes, that the bread in the sacrament, after consecration, becomes the very body and blood of Christ; this is that doctrine, the denial of which caused many blessed martyrs to be burned; because they could not entertain so gross an idea, as that a wretched priest had it in his power to make a Christ, or to change a wafer into the image of the invisible God.

4.
A most pernicious doctrine is that also, which teaches that the Pope has power to grant INDULGENCES, and to deal out pardons at his own sovereign pleasure, and at a certain price to remit all kinds of sins; so that a man may have pardon for adultery and murder, yea for murdering his father: if he be but able to purchase this diabolical kind of comfort; but the poor are not favored with any such privilege, through want of money to purchase such pardons. And alas! how much must those persons be deluded, who can imagine that knavish Priests have any such power as this.

5.
AND how destructive to society is the tenet which tells us, that no faith is to be kept with those whom they chuse to call hereticks, nay, that it is a mortal sin to keep faith with
hereticks:

heretics: hence the most solemn treaties have been disregarded; and if the Romish religion will thus justify perjury, what can it avail for papists to take oaths of allegiance to a Protestant? And is it not weakness for a Protestant prince to put confidence in such oaths; when those who swear them can so easily be absolved for breaking them?

6. SIMILAR to this evil principle of the Mother of harlots is that of the doctrine of auricular confession, a practice which is calculated to enslave the minds of the people to their priests, and that whereby the secrets of nations and families have been discovered, to the great prejudice and sometimes ruin of both. And in respect to young people, when they have had to do with Romish priests, who have asked them improper questions, of the vicious kind, it hath often been productive of the worst of consequences.

7. THE doctrine of man's merit, also is of no small account with the corrupt Church we are now exposing, but yet is an abomination in the sight of God; and those who espouse the Romish cause, make a strange mixture of Christ's merits, and the creature's, and when they absolve a person, they say, 'The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the blessed Virgin, and of all the Saints, whatsoever good thou hast done, and whatsoever evil thou hast suffered, be

be unto thee for remission of sins.' By this, the sinner is taught to lean partly on himself, partly on others, and partly on Christ; and Christ only shares the crown, in the esteem of this adulterous church; but the blood-bought church of Christ, gives all the glory to Christ alone.

In connection with the doctrine of merit, we may fix the doctrine of *purgatory*, by the suffering the pain of which, the papists vainly suppose, that their sins are purged away after death: and out of this fire they imagine their priests, if well feed'd with money, can obtain a deliverance for them; but this is quite contrary to scripture, which tells us, "As the tree falls, so it lies;" and unless we are purged from sin while here, we shall never be purged in the world to come. But this doctrine is of great importance to the revenue of the priests, and therefore no wonder if it should be contended for; and to those we have mentioned we might add the endless doctrines of penances, pilgrimages, invocations, and sacraments.

But we will now take a little notice of other abominations, brought forth by the mother of harlots, particularly those of the *idolatrous kind*, such as the bowing to and worshipping the host, and images in general; their adoration of the virgin Mary, and applying many of the Psalms to her, by changing Dominus, Lord, into Domina, Lady, and so forcing the words of the Holy Ghost to a most gross application:

application: and repeating those Psalms as songs of praise to her; to these must be added their praying to dead saints, and the superstitious respect and worship which is paid to innumerable reliques; and as they consider the Pope as a kind of a God upon earth, they kiss his toe, and shew that veneration for him which is equal to divine worship.

HENCE also the Romish Church hath been so worthy to be execrated on account of those "ABOMINABLE BLASPHEMIES," which have been uttered by it. A singular instance of which we have in an oration made by BONNER, to Queen Mary when she came to the throne, in which he highly praised the dignity of the Romish priesthood, and speaking of it, he said, 'A priest is greater than a king, more excellent than an angel, and maker of his Creator *.' The last words of which contain a most awful blasphemy; and thus the Bishop of Rome is called 'Dominus Deus noster Papa,' i. e. our Lord God the Pope, and 'Deus alter in terra,' i. e. another God upon earth. And by these characters, the Pope exalts himself above all that are called god among the creatures, and sits in the temple as God. And what is it less than blasphemy, to call upon the virgin Mary to 'command her son,' and to call her the 'Queen of heaven, the Mother of mercies,

* Vide Fox's Martyrology Vol. III. Page 41.

their

their life and their hope ; the light of the church, their advocate and mediators."

It may be profitable also to remark a few of the absurdities of the Church of Rome, here bear with me, if I take notice of their making their church-yards holy with holy water, and the christening their bells to chase away devils from souls departed; and their conjuring the devil out of children by baptism, using the priest's spittle to anoint them. And how would you be disgusted to hear as a miracle, of a saint walking several miles with his head off, and carrying it in his hand? They also pretend to shew you at the church of St. Ambrose, in Milan, the same brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness*; though the scripture tells us in the xviiiith chap. of the 2d book of Kings, that Hezekiah destroyed it. Some of the romanists will also tell you of a saint who was supported for some time by a cow and a calf, and afterwards restored them to life; and of a holy house of the virgin's being carried by angels from Palestine into Italy; and they will feign to shew you some of the hay out of the manger on which Christ lay, more than one tail of the ass on which he rode, some of the stones which killed Stephen, some of the loaves

* Vide, Prideaux's Connection, Vol. I. P. 17.

which fed the multitude in the wilderness, and some part of the shirt which the virgin Mary made for Christ; besides all these lying wonders they will shew you at different places, several tons of the teeth of one saint, as many pieces of the cross of Christ as would load a cart, and as many glasses of the virgin Mary's milk as would fill all the vessels of a country dairy; with many other abominable deceptions; to which I will only add their wretched absurdities in respect to their dead. Their priests will sometimes absolve persons after they are dead, and when this is done, if the body be unburied, the body is first beaten and then absolved, and buried in consecrated ground; and if the body be buried and cannot conveniently be dug up, the ground and sepulchre are then to be beaten.

BUT out of the mother of harlots have come the most abominable impieties also, not only of the idolatrous and blasphemous, but also of the vicious kind; and, as a general corruption hath spread through her principles, so also her practices have been of a like nature: and this is true, not only concerning some individuals, in a private character, but it is remarkably true of a great number of her infallible bishops, who have frequently been found in the practice of the most abominable and unnatural iniquities: some of the Popes have been adulterers, some sodomites, some magicians, some blasphemers

blasphemers, and all of them idolaters; and especially some of them were remarkable for encouraging and justifying murder and treason: a striking instance of which we have in Boniface the III^d, who when Phocus had slain his master, the emperor Mauritius, together with his wife and family, not sparing the infant at the breast, the Pope commended the action, and caused the hymn "glory to God in the highest," to be sung on the occasion.* And that you may know how remarkable the Popes have been for fearing God, I would remind you of the language of Julius the III^d, who when his physicians advised him to abstain from pork, he said he would have his pork, in despite of God, and when his cold peacock pie was withheld from him he maintained that he had more cause to be angry on that account, than God had to cast Adam out of Paradise for eating an apple. And if such impieties are practised and encouraged by the heads of the Romish Church, it is natural to suppose that the common people must be sadly infected with the contagion,

SUFFER me to detain you a little longer, while I mention to you some of the Abominable

* This was that blessed Pope who first asserted the supremacy of the bishops of Rome; a privilege he obtained from the murderer Phocas, mentioned above.

Cruelties exercised by the Church of which we are now speaking, and such cruelties will exist, while the head and members of this Church teach, that they do God good and acceptable service, in putting those whom they think are heretics to death; and in shewing their hatred to such persons, they have invented such strange kinds of tortures, that we might be led to conclude that hell itself had assisted them in finding them out.

BURNING alive hath been considered by them as a merciful kind of death for heretics; and they have sometimes endeavoured to exceed that cruelty, by drawing the martyrs up by pulleys, and then letting them down into the fire again; at other times they have killed children and thrust their raw flesh into the mouths of their parents; and some in England, while Rome played the tyrant here, were put to death, for no other reason, but that of teaching their own children the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments in English; and hundreds, for no other crime, but that of loving Christ, denying Transubstantiation, and cleaving to the religion of Jesus in its purity, were exposed to all manner of cruelties. About eight hundred lost their lives in the two first years of the reign of queen Mary: and at the massacre of Paris, about 10,000 were slain in Paris in one night, and not less than 20,000 more were barbarously murdered elsewhere. And his most christian

christian majesty, with his fowling piece, from his own palace shot the stragglers who had escaped death from *other* ruffians: and when this execrable act was finished, and so many innocent unarmed Protestants were thus killed, the bishop of Rome praised the Act, as being pious and meritorious, and caused TE DEUM to be sung in all the Churches, by way of giving God thanks.

By the same abominable religion, the Irish massacre was set on foot, whereby not less than 100,000 innocent Protestants lost their lives, and great numbers were exposed to cold, and nakedness, without any regard to either age or sex: but all fell alike victims to the more than savage cruelty of the Church of Rome. The ground of Smithfield yonder * has received the ashes of many blessed martyrs, and in the morn of the resurrection it will be found to contain much precious dust,

PERHAPS such days may be seen again. I would not, knowingly, give you a false alarm; but if we may judge by the signs of the times, by the present situation of our national affairs, and the gross condition of the Church, which seems to groan for persecution, to purge it of its

* The Meeting where this sermon was preached is near Smithfield.

large quantities of dross; if by these things we are to judge, we have reason to fear the fiery trial. And if our fears should be agreeably disappointed, it will do us no harm to be prepared and on the watch. I would only wish so far to sound the alarm, as to rouse the generality of professors from that wretched stupor, which at present appears to deprive them of their feelings, and endeavour to stir them up to cry earnestly to God, that he may yet shew mercy to Great Britain.

I shall now close my last head by observing, that to other abominations of the Church of Rome this has been added, THE PERVERTING OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, on which indeed all their other abominations are founded; for it may be truly said, that the Romish religion is founded on a perversion of scripture, aided by innumerable human traditions, which are totally contrary to the real sense of the Bible. But the time would fail me to enlarge here: I shall, therefore hasten to attempt some improvement of the whole; in which I must be but brief, as an apology for having engaged you so long already. Which, considering the particular nature of the subject, will, I hope, be borne with.

FIRST then, I infer from the whole, what an anti-christian religion is Popery; how unlike the

the meek, the merciful, the altogether lovely Jesus? How abominable are the tenets it teaches! And what accursed practices doth it promote and encourage.

SECONDLY, How great a mercy was the Reformation and Revolution! O, happy day! when the mists of popish darkness were dispelled from Britain, and when that WEAK POPISH prince James the II^d was FORCED from his kingdom, and the glorious king William ascended the throne; an event big with blessings to this nation at large, and to the Church of Christ in particular.

THIRDLY, Let us be thankful that we were not born, and do not now live, under the slavery of such a religion: we might have been born in Spain; or in Britain, at the time when the Pope's tyranny was severely felt here---, and who hath made us to differ?

FOURTHLY, Let us pray earnestly, that it may never bear sway in this country again: let us zealously oppose Popery, and take heed of the very beginnings of it; and let us cleave to the scriptures and the doctrines of grace, as a most glorious bulwark against the Romish religion.

FIFTHLY, Let sinners remember, that if they continue impenitent, whether they are, by
pro-

profession, Protestants or Papists, they cannot be saved; for "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Let us not be satisfied then, my dear friends, with being Protestants in theory only; but let us seek an experimental acquaintance with the excellency of the Protestant religion: for if we are hypocrites, a mere form of godliness will not enable us to stand fire and faggot, or other cruelties of the Church of Rome.

FINALLY, Let God's people pray for grace to stand, that they may be faithful unto death, if such trials should come: and let not the true believer fear; "for as his day is, so shall his strength be." Let us, then, seek his presence, and then we may say with the Psalmist, in the xlvith Psalm, and with Luther, "Though the earth be removed, and its mountains out of their place, yet will not we fear; for God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." And if we really trust in him, he will so support and deliver us, that we shall sing to all eternity, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen."

20 SE 65

FINIS.

